

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 292 - APRIL 11, 1977

1. ISRAEL. PERES WAS OVERWHELMINGLY NOMINATED BY THE LABOR PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE YESTERDAY TO HEAD ITS LIST FOR THE MAY 17 ELECTIONS. HIS NOMINATION WAS VIRTUALLY ASSURED WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON WITHDREW HIS NAME FROM CONSIDERATION LATE SATURDAY IN RETURN FOR ASSURANCES FROM PERES THAT HE WOULD BE NAMED DEFENSE MINISTER IN A PERES CABINET. LABOR'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS MAY BE ENHANCED, SINCE PERES BRINGS TO THE CAMPAIGN A FORCEFUL, CHARISMATIC PERSONALITY AND A REPUTATION UNTAINTED BY THE RECENT SCANDALS.

2. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS NOMINATION HAS GREATLY INCREASED THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MORE LIBERAL MAPAM GROUP COULD LEAVE THE LABOR ALIGNMENT AND RUN A SEPARATE KNESSET LIST. MAPAM THREATENED SUCH A MOVE LAST FEBRUARY IF PERES WERE CHOSEN; MAPAM'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS SCHEDULED TO MEET TODAY TO DECIDE THIS ISSUE. THE MAJORITY

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OF MAPAM'S MEMBERS ARE SAID TO FAVOR LEAVING THE ALIGNMENT.

IN A PRELIMINARY STEP IN THIS DIRECTION, DESIGNED TO PRESERVE ITS OPTIONS, MAPAM REQUESTED AND RECEIVED THE KNESSET ELECTION COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL TO BE FORMALLY RECOGNIZED AS A SEPARATE KNESSET FACTION.

3. PERES HAS MOVED TO FORESTALL SUCH AN OCCURRENCE HE--AS WELL AS ALLON, ZADOK, AND EBAN--MET YESTERDAY WITH MAPAM'S EXECUTIVE TO PERSUADE THEM TO STAY ON BOARD. DURING THE MEETING, PERES INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NOT FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION LIKUD. MOREOVER, HE OFFERED WHAT APPEARED TO BE SOP TO MAPAM BY TAKING A SOMEWHAT SOFTER LINE ON TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS, SAYING IN EFFECT THAT ANY GOVERNMENT HE LED WOULD BE PREPARED FOR COMPROMISES NOT ONLY IN THE SINAI AND GOLAN BUT ALSO ON THE WEST BANK. MAPAM HAS ARGUED THAT ISRAEL SHOULD CLEARLY EXPRESS ITS WILLINGNESS TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS ON ALL FRONTS IN EXCHANGE FOR A FINAL PEACE.

4. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY TEL AVIV OFFICERS, LIKUD'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER (AND UNOFFICIAL NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE PARTY), EZER WEIZMAN, SPOKE CONFIDENTLY OF A LIKUD VICTORY IN THE ELECTION, BUT EQUIVOCATED SOMEWHAT BY SAYING THAT A FEW SEATS EITHER WAY WILL DECIDE THE OUTCOME. HE PREDICTED THAT YADIN'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE (DMC) WOULD WIN ONLY 8-10 SEATS, BUT WISHED YADIN WELL SINCE HE WAS CUTTING INTO LABOR'S STRENGTH. WHILE CONFIRMING THAT LIKUD WAS TALKING WITH ARIK SHARON ABOUT HIS PARTY'S JOINING THE LIKUD AND HINTING THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SHARON WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL, WEIZMAN ALSO ADMITTED THAT THIS COULD BE A "MAKE OR BREAK" ELECTION FOR LIKUD'S FUTURE.

5. THE EMBASSY ALSO REPORTED THAT OPPOSITION LIKUD
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LEADER BEGIN WILL LIKELY LEAVE THE HOSPITAL TODAY FOR A REST HOME TO RECUPERATE FROM HIS HEART ATTACK. BEGIN HAS RESUMED HIS LEADERSHIP OF LIKUD'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN FROM HIS BED, BUT AT A REDUCED PACE.
(CONFIDENTIAL)

6. LEBANON. MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON OVER THE WEEKEND WAS CONFINED TO SHELLING AND OCCASIONAL GROUND SORTIES. THE RIGHTIST TOWN OF MARJAYOUN REMAINS BESIEGED. REPORTS INDICATE THAT FOLLOWING A FIVE-HOUR ASAD-ARAFAT MEETING IN DAMASCUS YESTERDAY THE PALESTINIANS MAY HAVE AGREED UPON A CEASEFIRE. THE CHRISTIANS, ACCORDING TO PHALANGE MILITARY LEADER BASHIR GEMAYEL, WOULD ACCEPT A CEASEFIRE.

7. EVEN IF THE SYRIANS, FATAH, THE SHAMOUNISTS AND THE PHALANGE AGREE TO A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, SERIOUS PROBLEMS REMAIN. THE REJECTIONISTS AND OTHER RADICAL ELEMENTS SEEM DETERMINED

TO CAPTURE MARJAYOUN. THEY MAY BE ABLE TO DRAW OTHER PALESTINIANS INTO CONFLICTS THEY INITIATE. EVEN WITHIN FATAH THE LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY RESTRAINING MORE ZEALOUS ELEMENTS. AS FOR THE RIGHTISTS, THE MAJOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE ONLY LIMITED INFLUENCE OVER RIGHTIST FORCES IN THE SOUTH. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ISRAELI PRESS, SAAD HADDAD, COMMANDER OF THE RIGHTIST FORCES, CRITICIZED SARKIS, SHAMOUN, AND GEMAYEL FOR FAILING TO DEFEND LEBANON AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS AND THE SYRIANS.

8. THE COMMANDER OF THE PALESTINIANS WHO CAPTURED THE VILLAGE OF KHIYAM LAST THURSDAY REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP HAS TAKEN THE DECISION TO BREAK THE RIGHTIST SECURITY BELT ALONG THE ISRAELI BORDER.

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9. CHRISTIAN REACTION IN THE BEIRUT AREA HAS BEEN INTENSE. A SOURCE OF OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE REPORTED THAT SOME 900 TO 1,000 MILITIA FROM EAST BEIRUT AND MOUNT LEBANON ARE READY TO GO SOUTH, BUT THE MILITIA LEADERSHIP LACKS THE MEANS TO GET THEM THERE QUICKLY. THE CHRISTIANS HAVE APPEALED TO THE OTHER ARABS TO INTERVENE AND TO ENFORCE THE CAIRO ACCORDS. UNDERLYING THE CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS IS THE UNSTATED THOUGHT THAT IF THE ARABS DO NOT ACT THE CHRISTIANS WILL HAVE TO TURN TO THE WEST OR ISRAEL FOR MORE DIRECT ASSISTANCE.

10. CAIRO MENA REPORTED THAT POLITICAL SOURCES BELIEVE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT AND THE US ARE CONTINUING SO THAT WASHINGTON WILL PRESSURE ISRAEL TO CEASE INTERFERING IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. WITHIN THIS CONTEXT, MENA OBSERVED THAT AMBASSADOR PARKER HAD MET FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS THREE TIMES IN THE LAST THREE DAYS. (SECRET)

11. PALESTINIANS. OUR EARLY ASSESSMENT OF ARAFAT'S FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THE USSR SUGGESTS THAT IT WENT WELL, BUT PROBABLY DID LITTLE TO BRING THE SIDES CLOSER ON MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE. THE VISIT DEMONSTRATED THE SPECIAL IMPORTANCE EACH ATTACHES TO ITS RELATIONSHIP. THE SOVIETS ACCORDED ARAFAT THE HIGHEST LEVEL RECEPTION YET, ALMOST EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF A HEAD OF STATE. MOREOVER, ARAFAT'S MEETING WITH BREZHNEV DRAMATIZED THE IMPORTANCE MOSCOW ATTACHES TO ITS PALESTINIAN

CONNECTION. ARAFAT, FOR HIS PART, WAS REPORTEDLY PLEASED WITH HIS FIRST PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE

SOVIET LEADER, AND HE WILL CLEARLY WELCOME THIS HIGHEST
POSSIBLE SOVIET IMPRIMATUR ON HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE PLO.
THE SOVIETS ARE LIKEWISE CERTAINLY PLEASED AT ARAFAT'S
GLOWING PRAISE FOR BREZHNEV AND FOR THE USSR'S
"CONSISTENT ALL-ROUND" SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN
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CAUSE.

12. ACCORDING TO THE TASS COMMUNIQUE ON THE TALKS,
BREZHNEV REAFFIRMED ROUTINE SOVIET BACKING FOR PALESTINIAN
SELF-DETERMINATION AND THEIR RIGHT TO CREATE A STATE,
AS WELL AS PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. WE HAVE
NOTHING TO CONFIRM PALESTINIAN CLAIMS THAT BREZHNEV
PROMISED ARAFAT THAT THE USSR WOULD REFUSE TO ATTEND
GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS UNLESS THE PLO PARTICIPATED ON
EQUAL TERMS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. NOR DID THE
SOVIETS SUGGEST ANY MOVEMENT TOWARD ENDORSEMENT OF UNGA
RESOLUTION 3236 WHICH ARAFAT PUBLICLY REFERRED TO IN
AN INTERVIEW WITH SOVIET RADIO.

13. ARAFAT "NOTED" THE IMPORTANCE OF BREZHNEV'S MARCH 21
SPEECH AND THE USSR'S PRINCIPAL POSITION, BUT AS IN THE
PAST DID NOT DIRECTLY ENDORSE EITHER. FINALLY, THERE
IS NO INDICATION THAT MOSCOW SUCCEEDED IN SELLING THE
PLO ON THE IDEA OF ATTENDING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE
ONLY IN THE SECOND STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS.

14. OUR MISSION IN GENEVA HAS REPORTED THAT THE
STAGE IS SET FOR A RENEWED ARAB-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION AT
THE ANNUAL WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY IN MAY. THE ARAB
CHARGES AGAINST ISRAEL WILL DWELL ON THE "HEALTH CONDI-
TIONS OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES"
WITH THE LONG-RANGE ARAB GOAL CONTINUING TO BE THE
SUSPENSION OF ISRAELI MEMBERSHIP IN THE WHO. (CONFIDEN-
TIAL)

15. EGYPT. ACCORDING TO CAIRO MENA, SADAT WILL MEET
WITH KING HUSSEIN, ASAD, AND SAUDI CROWN PRINCE FAHD
PRIOR TO THEIR SCHEDULED US TRIPS. SADAT REPORTEDLY
WILL INFORM THESE LEADERS OF THE RESULTS OF HIS
WASHINGTON VISIT IN AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE A "UNIFIED"
ARAB VIEWPOINT FOR PRESENTATION TO US LEADERS. THERE
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HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT A MINI-SUMMIT AMONG THE LEADERS

OF THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES MAY BE HELD IN THE
LATTER PART OF APRIL.

16. OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE IN CAIRO REPORTED THAT THE
BRITISH ROLLS ROYCE FIRM SIGNED A LONG-TERM CONTRACT
WITH EGYPT ON APRIL 2 TO PROVIDE SPARE PARTS AND
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND OVERHAUL
OF EGYPTIAN MIG-21 AND OTHER AIRCRAFT ENGINES.
THE CONTRACT REPORTEDLY IS FOR AN ESTIMATED 9 MILLION
POUNDS STERLING.

17. LEADERS OF EGYPT'S LEFTIST POLITICAL PARTY HAVE
BEEN BANNED FROM TRAVELLING OUTSIDE EGYPT--UNLESS
THEY RECEIVED THE PERMISSION OF SECURITY AUTHORITIES.

18. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY CAIRO, AHMAD SIDQI,
THE DIRECTOR OF THE EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY'S
AFRICAN DEPARTMENT, REITERATED EGYPT'S CONCERN OVER
THE SOVIET-CUBAN OFFENSIVE IN AFRICA. HE ALSO NOTED
WHAT "A GROWING NUMBER OF AFRICAN STATES" VIEW AS
"WESTERN "PASSIVITY" IN THE FACE OF THIS THREAT. SIDQI
FOUND CASTRO'S VISIT TO MOSCOW A PARTICULARLY "FLAGRANT
DEFIANCE" OF THE WEST AND AFRICA, AND CLAIMED THAT SOME
AFRICAN LEADERS ARE SAYING THAT IF KISSINGER WERE STILL
IN OFFICE, THE US WOULD HAVE TAKEN SOME COUNTERACTIONS.
(CONFIDENTIAL)
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